

**PRINCIPAL CAUSE
OF THE
MISERIES OF THE POOR,
AND OF THEIR
GREAT EXPENCE TO THE PUBLIC,
SHEWN;**

**IN HOPES OF GETTING THESE EVILS IN
SOME MEASURE OBTIATED,**

**AND SO RENDERING THE POOR
MORE HAPPY IN THEMSELVES,**

**AND
LESS BURDENSOME TO THE COMMUNITY.**

**ADDRESSED TO
THOMAS GILBERT, Esq,
MEMBER FOR THE CITY OF LITCHFIELD.**

**L O N D O N:
PRINTED FOR J. F. AND C. RIVINGTON,
N° 62, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD.**

MDCCLXXXVII.





T O

T H O M A S G I L B E R T, E s q.

Member of Parliament for the City of Litchfield.

S I R,

FROM your zealous endeavours to serve your country materially, every lover of his country must necessarily hold you in esteem. This esteem I beg leave to profess, by addressing to you the few following considerations, hoping, at the same time, that as they are somewhat in unison with your salutary schemes for the relief of the poor, and for lessening their burden to the public, they will, mean as they are, obtain your pardon for this their intrusion upon you.

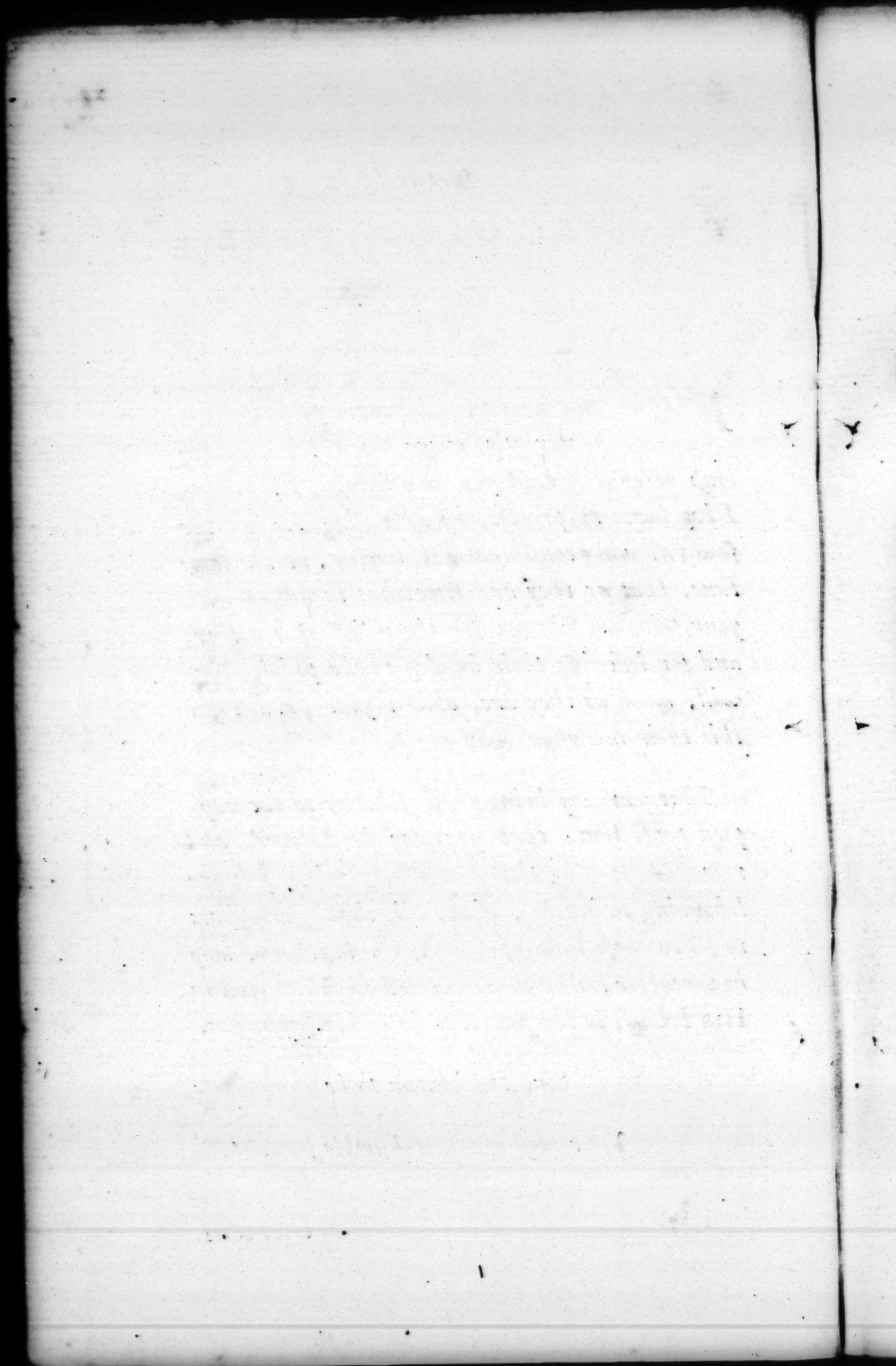
That you may bring these schemes to the happiest perfection; that you may be beloved, and rewarded too, by that community which you are labouring to benefit; above all, that your efforts to serve these least of CHRIST's brethren, may be hereafter looked on as exerted for HIM and in HIS behalf, is the sincere wish of him, who has,

Sir, the honour to be

Your most obedient humble servant,

1787.

Clericus.



A
P R I N C I P A L C A U S E
O F T H E
M I S E R I E S O F T H E P O O R , &c.

AMONGST the variety of causes that tend to debauch the morals of our people, to multiply the miseries of the poor especially, and to make them so very burdensome (as they are become) to their neighbours, there is, perhaps, not one more productive of these mischiefs, than the number of little ale-houses, and unrestrained ale-houses that abound throughout this kingdom. They are now dispersed about in all parts of our larger towns, even in those parts where there can be no concourse of people for the sake of commerce and business, as well as at the market-cross, and in the most frequented streets. There are also generally two or three of them planted in our smallest, most sequestered villages, even in those where there is no thorough-fare of consequence, and where, therefore, houses for the accommodation of travellers can be but very rarely wanted. Now what good purposes can they serve in these situations? If they are in some cases attended with some conveniencies, they are certainly few, very few and trifling, in comparison of, and by no means a counter-balance to, the numberless mischiefs they occasion. For it is palpable

B

they

they are the common haunts of the idle, the drunken, and the dissolute, who sadly swarm in our larger towns, and of whom the number in our villages is far from being small. For by the way, our country-peasants, so docile in nothing as in vice, have introduced most of the follies of their town-neighbours, which they now practise, like them, with the utmost bare-faced assurance.

—Well—To some of these houses, these recesses calculated for intemperance, numbers of our lower people, of all denominations, little artificers, journeymen-tradesmen, &c. (especially in the larger towns) resort almost every evening in the week; and here they are suffered to debauch themselves, frequently till midnight, to the disqualifying themselves (amongst other mischiefs) in a great measure for their work the next day; which, the fever contracted the preceding day not being gone off, it is not uncommon with many of them to devote wholly to the same dissipation; thus continuing their uselessness to the public, and thus robbing, day after day, their miserable families of bread. Here they exemplify what the COVENTRY Ribband-weaver, addressing himself to a circle of sots in a little dirty ale-house, is said in drunken mood to have thus humorously lamented:—"Ah," says he, displaying his paws, "this pair of hands, when "I please to work, will earn me *four* shillings "a day; but then," says he, "the misfortune "lies here, (at the same time giving himself a "a good slap upon the paunch) this belly will "take off *six*."—Besides, at many of these
houses

houses they contract a pernicious habit of gambling, in various ways, by cocking *, by playing at cards in the winter, and skittles or some such games in the summer; thus further squandering away the small gains of their labour, and encreasing their families' distress. And so, having laid up nothing against adverse fortune, on the least sickness, or untoward accident approaching, they immediately become burdensome to their respective parishes for subsistence.

Now it is not to be supposed, that people who act thus irregularly in common on all other days, should be at all scrupulous about the observance of the LORD'S-DAY. Accordingly on Sunday, when their usual business is forbidden, these people, having no stomach for praying and preaching, and as little for reading God's word at home, and considering whether their conduct is regulated thereby, betake themselves to these places of entertainment, and here they observe the sabbath in a *blessed* manner indeed; in drinking, in reading news-papers, in very unprofitable conversation at the best, and too often even in downright drunkenness, wasting

* There is, perhaps, no sort of gambling more pernicious to the lower people than cocking, in many respects. It, in common with other games, picks their pockets, and, added to this, it teaches them wanton cruelty, and runs them into the most noisy, riotous profaneness. And yet nothing is more common than to see our paltry ale-houses publicly advertising cock-matches to be fought between the *gentlemen* of this county, and the *gentlemen* of that. And pray who are these same *gentlemen*? Why, they are generally a parcel of the most illiberal, dissolute, worthless wretches, that can be collected together from the whole adjacent country.

frequently in *one* night half the earnings of the *whole* week ; in a word, outrageously violating the sacred day, by omitting every thing they ought, and doing almost every thing they ought not, to do upon it. In short, the practices at these houses are not only most unseemly in themselves, but generally most melancholy in their consequences. Poverty and want constantly attend them ; and theft, robbery, and even murder itself, march too commonly in their rear. In short, it is notorious how sadly detrimented the public is in general by these means, in many respects ; how parishes are heavily burdened by an extraordinary increase of the rates hereby occasioned ; how industrious wives and innocent children are piteously aggrieved ; and how the poor uncontrouled sottish idlers themselves are hence doomed to complicated sorrows to the end of life. And here it is obvious to observe by the way, that the public will find, if I am not greatly mistaken, these *Sunday-schools* will be the great counter-actors of the other *Sunday-schools* lately established, in many parts of this kingdom, for instilling the principles of religion into the children of our poorer brethren. When the child returns home in the evening from *his* *Sunday-school*, imbued with religious principles and proper notions of his duty, it is well if he does not often meet his father, returned too from *his* *Sunday-school*, intoxicated with drink, and deranging the whole family with his riotous profaneness. The child, long used to pay respect to his father's authority, and biaſſed, at the same time, to what is wrong, by
4 the

the fatal obliquity of human nature, will (it is too probable) be influenced more effectually to vice, by the bad example before his eyes at home, than dehorted from it by the feebly-acting, tho' salutary precepts, that may have been given him at school by those, whom he has had but little acquaintance with, and has very possibly still less regard for. Must not then the good intentions of our Sunday-schools, think you, be greatly frustrated by these means, if not almost wholly defeated by them? They certainly must. But to make them more thoroughly productive of good, to secure the benefit of them more certainly to the rising generation, as *they are set up, these* counter-acting schools must be, in some sense, *put down, i. e.* be kept within the bounds of decency and regularity, which it is lamentably notorious they in general by no means are. These opposite Sunday-seminaries cannot flourish together. Meridian light may as well consist with midnight darkness.

But, perhaps, it will be urged, by way of answer, that the masters of these houses are answerable to the public for their behaviour, and are liable to forfeit their licences, for suffering drunkenness, sabbath-breaking, gaming, or any other irregularities in them. They are so. But where are the people, in these days so impatient of controul, that will bestir themselves in these matters, and call the publicans to account for any of these disorders that they shall permit. Alas! too many in all stations are themselves abettors of some or other of
their

their irregular practices. From these, nothing but an encouragement of, or at least a connivance at, their enormities can be expected. Others are timorous, so dare not engage in disputes. Others are indolent, and will not. Others are fearful of the odium incurred by informers *. Others have some little dirty interest to serve, to which they sacrifice every other consideration. And what is most certainly a very principal objection to the punishing irregular publicans, there is such a general backwardness, from one or more of the above reasons, to join or even give the least countenance to any one that would exert himself, and

* It is a consideration well worth attending to, that informations being often made by people of bad characters, and to dirty purposes, the abettors of vice are always ready to brand every well-meaning corrector of their practices with the title of informer; a name generally held by a generous public in detestation. Thus they hope to transfer the censure of themselves to the man who informs against them, and so by these means be suffered to go on, without punishment or notice, in the continuation of any irregularities they may have taken up. But surely it should be considered, that informers are, agreeably to the motives they act upon, either very despicable, or very praise-worthy characters. Where a man is actuated by a personal pique, or by any selfish, sordid by-ends, to raise (for instance) his own reputation by impeaching that of others, or to build his own fortune on his neighbour's ruin or loss, *his* informations, tho' perhaps in some respects useful to the public, yet certainly speak the informer a pitiful, mean-spirited wretch. But where a man, influenced by a zeal against immorality, and an abhorrence of vice, steps out in defence of God's and his country's laws, and brings a flagrant breaker of them, for example's sake, to punishment; surely such an informer deserves well of his country, and is as much an object of esteem and applause, as the base informer is of contempt and detestation.

put the laws in execution, that many a well-wisher to reformation is deterred from stepping out in the cause of virtue, for fear of standing quite singular, and of bearing alone the ill-will of the reprobates, who in high as well as low life are but too numerous, and whose mouths, to a man, are sure to be opened against him.

But still it may be asked, What occasion for these complaints, when there are parish-officers in all parishes, who (besides the other businesses of their office) are bound *by oath*, to inspect the behaviour of the parishioners they act for, to visit public-houses especially, and if disorderly to call them to order, and, where lenient measures will not prevail, to make presentments for the irregularities that come to their knowledge.

Sed quis custodiet ipsos

Custodes?

When guards themselves are so propense to sleep,
Who, I beseech you, shall such keepers keep?

Parish-officers are, if not ignorant people, however, but little attentive in general, it is too evident, to those strong obligations they are so solemnly laid under. Or they are too often irregular people themselves, and so have but little room, and less inclination for animadverting on the irregularities of others. Or they are in * trade themselves, or some of their near connections

* Magistrates in boroughs and corporations are very much in this predicament. Untrue to their trust, they very rarely take notice of any irregularities, except where the invasion of property is concerned. The consequence is—the generality,

connections are in trade, and they or their friends sell (for instance) malt, or hops, or tea, or spirits, or tobacco, or some other articles, to these public-houses; the irregularities of these houses must therefore be winked at, at all events, for the masters of them must not be affronted on any consideration whatsoever. Or, lastly, being in many parishes but inferior people, they pretend they are not of consequence enough to call others to account, and so the most useful part of their office is frittered away to some unworthy motive or another. "They have taken an oath, it is true, to curb irregularities, but they must live by their neighbours," (as the cant-phrase is;) "others have been as careless of the oaths they have taken as they, and they shall fare, no doubt, as well as their brethren, who have laid themselves under the same obligation." Thus are oaths disregarded, parishes uninterruptedly debauched, levies greatly encreased, and the poor made poorer and more miserable. And all for what? Why truly in a great measure for fear of affronting a few idle upstart people, who are daily impoverishing multitudes, and growing rich themselves by the egregious follies and debaucheries of mankind.

rality, from being continually winked at, "do what is right in their own eyes," more than if "there was no king in Israel"—no magistrate at all residing amongst them.—For this reason some particular sorts of tradesmen, such as Maltsters especially, and Dealers in Spirits, ought by no means to be suffered to act as Justices of the Peace. Instead of curbing the irregularities of public-houses, most of them actuated by little sordid motives, are sure to overlook *every* thing, if not to abet them in *any* thing, for the sake of procuring their custom and serving their own paltry interests.

But

But further ; if, for preventing the mischiefs arising from the irregularities of public houses, these houses were to be reduced in number, it may be asked, where will you quarter your soldiers ? Perhaps some reduction of the soldiery, at least in these peaceable times, might not be altogether unadvisable, and the letting what is taken from the army be added to the navy, which certainly in a national view is our primary object of attention. It is devoutly to be wished that we shall *hastily* enter into a land-war, never, never more. Then the land-forces wanted will be but few. For as for intestine broils, which the lower people engage in, they generally arise from the want of money to buy provisions when trade is dead, or when by unkind seasons, or by any other untoward accident, they become more scarce, and of consequence more dear. But were they to be kept from these ruinous ale-houses, they would, with common industry, have (generally speaking) a sufficient competency in their pockets to provide comfortable food for their families in the dearest times. Then there is no reason to think but that they would be contented with their lot, humble as it is. You would then hear of no insurrection to quell ; consequently no soldiers would be wanted for that purpose. But if it is proper (as very probably it is) to have a standing army, something surely, without any great violation of our œconomy, might with propriety be added to their pay. And as each public-house (if a reduction of these houses should take place) must take more of these soldiers, the addition might properly go to the master of it, to make him

amends for the additional burden. But, after all, might it not be better to put the soldiers, as they do in Ireland, into barracks? It would probably be more comfortable to them, and to the towns where they would otherwise be quartered. The towns would get rid of the burdensome expence, and the military of those flights and incivilities that, on that account, they frequently meet with. In short, the soldiers and lower people in towns do but corrupt and debauch one another; for the greater the number of people, who have little to do, that are got together, the more mischiefs, (generally speaking) through the depravity of nature and the times, they will unfortunately be almost always running into.—In one word; the soldiery, bad as the expedient in some respects might be, had better even be almost annihilated, than have the continuance of these little ale-houses the condition of their continuance. It would be better even to be over-run by a foreign enemy, than to have the worst of enemies, the devil, let loose amongst us, as he now is, in every corner of the kingdom.

But at last comes another advocate, with an impregnable plea, as he thinks it, for these houses.—If you lessen the number of your public-houses, you lessen the revenue, and from whence will you make up the deficiency? I should be sorry to add to the embarrassments of government, with all its exigencies, but I am well assured the state will suffer more in the end, from the dreadful corruption of morals, and other miseries of the poor, which these houses occasion, than from the defalcation of the revenue,

venue, which their suppression would cause. But the legislative powers are, I trust, not yet so put to it but that they could remedy the inconveniencies from hence arising. With the greatest deference and submission to them, may I be permitted to offer two or three hints to their notice? A special tax on all the most expensive non-necessaries of life, if they will bear any further weight to be laid upon them; an heavy duty on all public places of diversion; a still heavier on all implements of that ruinous gaming which so fatally encreases, such as cards, dice, &c. a considerable additional toll on all cattle travelling on the LORD'S-DAY, and on every horse and carriage used (except on those used in carrying to or from places of worship) on that day, those practices big with mischiefs to the community at large, and very particularly so to drovers, chaise-drivers, postillions, waggons, and all that ignorant line of life; a double or treble tax on all pensions, and on all civil and ecclesiastical *fine-cures*, if, after the present possessors of them, they should not be abolished or thoroughly new modified, which would still be better; a further duty on all licences for those public-houses that shall be suffered to continue such, and a double addition still for selling gin and spirits by retail, if they are permitted to retail at all such poisons to the people; a temporary properly regulated poll-tax, to take in all above such a certain rank or degree in life; and if all these would not make up the curtailed revenue, an equalization of the land-tax at last; (for every nerve

had better be strained to the utmost, than suffer these houses to go on impoverishing and debauching the whole body of the poor :) * these imposts, I say, conjunctively taken, would, beyond a doubt, nay a part of them only would most probably be an ample equivalent for the loss which the revenue would sustain by diminishing the ale-houses in number. A certain number of public-houses, on public roads, for the accommodation of travellers, and in the public parts of towns for the same purpose, and for the entertainment of those who attend fairs and markets in these towns, are, indeed, it is obvious, quite as necessary as any conveniencies whatever, in this commercial country. And if the masters of them manage their houses with decorum and regularity, they are worthy of much respect, and indeed the more to be respected on account of the numerous temptations they will probably meet with to a contrary behaviour. But then let them take care that they do thus act. They are indulged with licences, as a special favour, by the public, and they are answerable to the public for any abuses

* The taking in and cultivating the waste Crown-lands, in aid of the revenue, has of late been much talked of. Why not lop off then some thousands of licences, and give the dispossessed pot-house-keepers a certain portion of these lands to cultivate, subject to their paying an easy rent to Government for the same? Thus would they exchange unwholesome idleness for an healthy employ; thus would they add to the real riches of the public, instead of being the drones and suckers of its vitals; and, in short, would contribute much to the lessening the number of our dire executions, instead of being *wet-nurses* to the gallows, as they now abundantly are,

of

of them. And certainly, that there may be a proper check upon their behaviour, they should all of them, without partiality, be frequently inspected, on the LORD'S-DAY especially, and at other times also occasionally, by proper authority. The *regular* publican must be pleased with such inspection, both that he may be backed by it in keeping up his regularity, and that his propriety of acting may appear. And if any are angry at it, let them smart for their impudence; let them be punished into order and better manners.

In short, if it is worth while that the lower people especially should be saved from ruinous extravagance, drunkenness, and debauchery, to the destruction of their health and constitution; from violating GOD'S sabbath, to the utter subversion of their morals; from squandering the fruits of their labours in brutal excess, to the keeping their abused families in abject poverty, and to the making them miserably wretched; from rendering themselves much less useful, and consequently much more burdensome to the public; from becoming habitually idle, then of course invaders of their neighbour's property, and so victims by *troops* to a shameful and dolorous death *: if it is worth while to hinder

* It is a most melancholy fact, that there have been, as we are told by the public prints, more offenders capitally convicted, at the three last sessions in the last year, at the Old-Bailey, than at any former period, in the same space of time, in the annals of Newgate, viz. 29, 23, 21. Total 73. Olamentable prospect of this our corrupt land! Is it not more than probable, that the eggs, from whence flowed this worse than

hinder our new-established Sunday-schools from being counter-acted by these schools of satan, and that the labours of the Clergy be not in a great measure frustrated (amongst the poor especially) in almost every parish of the kingdom, and that the preaching of God's word be not rendered with the many totally ineffectual to reformation: if it is worth while that millions be saved *certainly* from temporal, and *probably* from endless ruin: if it is worth while, I say, to contribute to the preventing these dire evils, —not only gin-shops, night-cellars, and all such engines of debauchery, should be utterly abolished, but the number of our ale-houses throughout the whole kingdom should be abridged, and the irregularities of such as are suffered, should be carefully restrained. For it is a fact, beyond all doubt, that public-houses, unrestrained, are a great source of the above specified mischiefs to thousands and ten thousands in lower life.

I heard a late very worthy Judge *, some few years ago, whilst speaking of the sad growth of vice and immorality; I heard him observe from the bench, at an assize in the country, (and he quoted his authority) that some years ago (perhaps in the second Charles's time, or rather nearer to the latter end of the last century, or thereabout) the prisons in LONDON were so particularly full of felons, that it struck the than adder's poison in so great abundance, were most of them hatched in those nests of lewdness and debauchery, the little public-houses of entertainment?—There have, alas! numbers besides been executed, since the commencement of the present year.

* Mr. Justice Nares.

town

town with astonishment and horror. The Justices took the matter into serious consideration, and put down three hundred ale-houses, viz. two hundred and twenty in LONDON, and eighty in the BOROUGH. And what was the consequence? Why, said the worthy Judge, the consequence was this: there was scarcely one, I really think he said, not one felon to be tried at the next General Gaol-Delivery. If the same expedients were now to be tried (and when, I beseech you, were they ever more wanted?) it is highly probable they would produce much the same salutary effects.

We have been told this last year, in the public papers, that at BRADFORD, in WILTS, the Overseer appointed for regulating the poor of that parish, has, by a strict œconomy, but chiefly *by keeping the poor out of public-houses*, actually saved to that parish, within the last three years, more than five thousand pounds, and that the poor are not less comfortably provided for.

We find also from the same authority, that the inhabitants of PAINSWICKE, in GLOUCESTERSHIRE, (a town zealous in promoting the new Sunday-schools) have lately exerted themselves to lessen the poor's-rates, which have been rising year after year, without diminishing the wretchedness of the poor in the least degree. They have, therefore, it seems, determined to make trial of a measure, which had been often hinted at, but from its unpopular tendency, had found no support. They had in that town no less than thirteen public houses.

The

The gentlemen of the parish, therefore, came to a resolution of petitioning the Justices to licence no more than five. They declare their intention of keeping a strict eye on these houses that are licensed, both with respect to the persons who frequent them, and the irregularities they may permit; in hopes, say they, of repressing (and surely it is one of the likeliest ways of repressing) the enormities which prevail among the lower ranks of people.

And surely happy for this nation, in many respects, would it palpably be, if the legislature would, in their wisdom, take these matters into their further most serious consideration, and oblige *, under an heavy penalty (for it is more than probable nothing else will oblige) some subordinate agents, especially appointed in every parish, to help, *in good earnest*, towards the stopping and preventing these sore evils, which cause such miseries to the poor themselves, and make them such burdens to the industrious tradesman; which are the fruitful sources of most kinds of wickedness, and exterminators of every thing that is laudable from the mind. And were care taken that these agents be half as trusty, with respect to the good order of publicans, as the officers of the revenue are, with regard to their exact payments of excise, the state would, in the end, be more benefited

* It is true the law admits already of no public-houses, *merely* for the sake of drinking and carousing in; and yet it is notorious that hundreds of these houses are, notwithstanding, suffered to be set up every year, *merely* for this very purpose. Ineffectual, it seems, from some mismanagement or other, are the laws in being for remedying the evils under consideration.

by the diffusion of good, or at least by the curbing and preventing of bad morals, than it could be even by the fullest Exchequer, "pressed down, and running over," at the expence of the virtue and morals of the people. In fact, as public-houses are suffered at present to go on, preaching is but a farce to the bulk of the people, and the heavenly virtue of alms-giving itself is to the generality of the poor (*men* at least) but a fund for drunkenness and mischief. Happy further for each parish would it assuredly prove, if Magistrates would take no * sureties, but such as are really sober and *truly* reputable characters, for the behaviour of publicans, on their application for licenses; and for the larger towns particularly, where public-houses are more numerous, if the Magistrates resident in those towns would cause them often to be visited in an authoritative manner.—Happy would it be for all within their reach, if parish-officers would be more conscientiously observant of their oaths, instead of treating them as mere matters of form, as is too much the case; and if they would duly inspect public-houses, especially on Sundays, as both the Common and Ecclesiastical Law requires them to do.—Happiest of all for

* I have been credibly informed, that a poor fellow, not worth a groat, has been accepted, year after year, as a bondsman for many of the publicans in a large-market-town I could name.—Such acceptance might possibly be complying with the letter of the law, but surely it is too great a farce to talk seriously about. A poor person, a publican, and some other persons of particular descriptions, ought not, on any account, to be admitted in such a capacity, for the most obvious reasons.

D

the

the publicans themselves (as little as they may believe it) would these schemes adopted be ; for they would oblige many of these wretched people to betake themselves to a more innocent, creditable, useful way of life, would in a great measure save the remainder from ruining their health and morals, and from being cursed with the ill-gotten wages of sin ; in short, would enable them to reflect, when they shall have retired from their bustling scenes of life, on the past management of their houses, with (what it is impossible they should do now, as they are in general managed, with) comfort and real satisfaction.

After all—to the legislature, above all, we look up for relief. 'Tis the legislature only that can effectually give it in the matter in question. For scarcely one individual, be he ever so great an enemy to the irregularities of ale-houses ; scarcely one, from some discouragement or other, will stir a single inch (in good earnest) to remedy the evil in any degree. The temporal, the everlasting welfare of our countrymen, especially of our *poor* countrymen, are at stake ; at stake too with great odds against them, unless the legislature, in great mercy to them, will resolutely turn the balance in their favour. We wish, in spite of themselves, to save our lower brethren from misery. For that purpose in the legislature we principally hope ; of the legislature we supplicate aid. And if their countenance is but thoroughly vouchsafed in the case before us, sabbath-breaking and drunkenness, extravagance and brutal dissipa-

tion, with all their dire consequences, no doubt, must greatly be checked; and as they are checked, good morals, in some degree, must necessarily be substituted in their room. Our poor people and their families would then live in a more cleanly, comfortable, and let me add, in a more harmonious manner. They would be much less burdensome, and, for that reason, much more pleasantly looked on in their several parishes. They would be better subjects, healthier men, honefter and quieter neighbours, and truer Christians; real riches, instead of thorough nuisances, to their country; and, in fact, would be changed into a most valuable part of society, from having been in their drunken and dissolute state mere savages at large, the very pests of a neighbourhood, and a standing reproach to the abused and suffering community.

*Cauponulæ delendæ, Cauponæ coërcendæ, aut
nunquam valebit* RESPUBLICA.

T H E E N D.

